

Nonetheless, on Nov. 7, 1994, Hudson casino activists Nancy Bieraugel and Kenneth Tilsen talked with Secretary Babbitt about the Hudson casino proposal after he spoke at a fundraiser held in Eau Claire for congressional candidate Harvey Stower. According to Bieraugel and Tilsen, they told Babbitt that they thought the casino proponents were misrepresenting the views of the Hudson community. Bieraugel and Tilsen reported that Secretary Babbitt appeared to have a general knowledge of the casino proposal. He told them that he did not know the details, but that he had read that the Governor opposed the casino, so it was “a moot point.”⁴¹⁷

At the dinner that followed the event, Bieraugel and Tilsen told investigators, they were seated next to the Secretary and conversed with him for about an hour and a half, explaining the history of the dog track and specifics of the community’s reaction to the Hudson application. Bieraugel expressed her concern that Assistant Secretary Ada Deer might be biased in favor of the applicants. She also expressed her desire to bring a delegation to meet with Babbitt in Washington. Bieraugel recalled Secretary Babbitt reassuring her about his faith in Deer and his belief that the issue probably was moot because of Gov. Thompson’s opposition. He also expressed concern about the potential effect upon the St. Croix waterway of the proposed casino. He discouraged her from bringing a delegation to Washington, and promised that he would give her a chance to come to Washington should the Hudson application appear likely to be approved.

⁴¹⁷OIC Bieraugel Int. at 6. Gov. Thompson had made a seemingly strong anti-Hudson casino statement during a campaign debate in this time frame. Generally, however, the Governor’s statements allowed him some flexibility, as he normally stated only his opposition to any expansion of gambling. Applicant representatives claim that the Governor would not have opposed the project if they had eliminated one of their pre-existing casinos and agreed to build no more. In interviews with OIC investigators, Thompson stated that he understood that a joint application by two or more tribes could result in a net reduction of gambling. In any event, Thompson now states that he would most likely have sought further local reaction through a referendum on the Hudson application if Interior had approved the application.